

the Path to the Past eviscerates Medicare, forcing retirees to bear the brunt of cost increases and severely jeopardizing their access to health care, replacing today's guaranteed access with a limited voucher system.

Today, thanks to Medicare, every one of America's senior citizens has access to health care coverage. Before Medicare was enacted in 1965, roughly half of all seniors suffered without health insurance. The Path to the Past would send American seniors back to the times of scrambling to find coverage while always worrying how they will be able to afford rising health care costs on fixed incomes.

The Republican Path to the Past brings back the doughnut hole in Medicare part D prescription drug coverage. Under the doughnut hole, many seniors have been forced to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket for prescription medication because they weren't covered by part D.

I was proud to fix that inequity and eliminate the doughnut hole during the previous Congress. Unfortunately, the Republican Path to the Past brings it back once again, requiring many seniors to pay thousands of dollars extra for their prescription drugs. That's a past Americans don't want.

The Republican Path to the Past destroys Medicaid, replacing it with a vastly limited monetary grant to the States, forcing them to either reduce benefits to lower-income families or to reduce the number of eligible families or both. Currently, 34 million children receive health care through Medicaid.

From 1997 to 2009, the percentage of children without health insurance dropped from 13.9 percent to 8.2 percent, largely because of Medicaid. The Republican Path to the Past risks the future of millions of America's children by risking that health care coverage. That's a past America does not want.

The Path to the Past incredulously blames rising college tuition on efforts to make Pell Grants more accessible to kids and would return the Nation to a system where only the wealthy can afford college. Contrary to what the Republican budget states, college tuition costs have been rising long before the expansion of Pell Grants.

In fact, from 2002 to 2007, tuition costs rose 31 percent more than the rate of inflation, the worst 5-year increase in college costs in over 30 years.

In response, last year we reformed the student loan program, expanded the Pell Grant program, and allowed hundreds of thousands of students the ability to make higher education more affordable. The Republican Path to the Past returns the Nation to the years of rising tuition without any relief. That's a past America does not want.

The Republican Path to the Past ignores the economic recovery under way and indiscriminately slashes investments in ways that Goldman Sachs said will lower economic growth by 2 percent and increase unemployment by

1 percent. During the height of the Great Recession, for several months, 700,000 Americans lost their jobs.

According to Mark Zandi, an economist with Moody's Analytics and an adviser to Senator McCain's Presidential campaign, those policies would cost American workers another 700,000 jobs. The Economic Policy Institute projected a loss of 800,000 jobs, while the Center for American Progress said it will cost 900,000 jobs. That's a past America does not want to go back to.

The Republican budget proposal, the Path to the Past, returns us to the law of the jungle and the survival of the fittest, throwing the young, the elderly, the sick, and the disadvantaged on their own fates.

That's not an America I believe in.

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#### AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, as many people know, and I do not say this with pride, but for years, I've been signing letters to the immediate and extended families of those killed in Afghanistan and Iraq. I have signed over 9,966 letters. It is a constant reminder to me of the high cost of war.

Our country is in deep financial trouble. It continues to amaze me that we would raise the debt ceiling, spend money we don't have and cut much-needed programs from our seniors and children while we continue to spend \$8 billion a month in Afghanistan.

Karzai is a corrupt leader. His government is corrupt. He has stated that he would rather side with the Taliban than the United States. This is based on an article in the Washington Post on December 8, 2010. What sense does it make to sacrifice our young American lives, our money and our resources for a man who does not want our troops in his country? It simply does not make any sense at all.

According to a March 15 Washington Post/ABC News Poll, 73 percent of Americans want our troops out of Afghanistan this summer. Last week, every Member of Congress received an Associated Foreign Press article from Congressman PETER WELCH. I do not have time to read the whole article, but let me share some excerpts from his letter to each of my colleagues and his colleagues, and I will quote the letter from Congressman WELCH.

"I want to draw your attention to a recent Associated Foreign Press article detailing the funneling of USAID dollars to the Afghan Taliban, reportedly making Western reconstruction funds the main source of income for insurgents.

"According to the story, an estimated 10 percent of the cost of every development project is used to pay off the Taliban. The United States has

spent \$56.1 billion in Afghanistan since 2002."

Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Congress and the American citizens that the Taliban are killing and maiming American soldiers and marines. It is time that this Congress debate the Afghan war and to bring our troops home. Here we are talking about cutting spending for programs that help the American people, but yet we continue to send billions and billions of dollars to a corrupt leader. It doesn't make sense. Mr. Speaker, we could save American lives, which is the most important, but also \$8 billion a month if we were to bring our troops home from Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to come to the floor once a week, and I will bring photographs in the way of posters to remind the American people and my colleagues in Washington of the price of war. Right beside me now is the Air Force Honor Guard at Dover bringing a hero home in a transfer case, which is known as a coffin as well, flag draped.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this Congress to debate the issue of bringing our troops home from Afghanistan. How much longer can we afford to give lives of our young Americans to a corrupt leader? It makes no sense. I want my colleagues in both parties to awaken.

JIM MCGOVERN, Democrat, and WALTER JONES, a conservative, will soon have a bill that we will put on the floor to debate bringing our troops home. I want the American people to join us in bringing our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, as I do always when I close, I will ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I will ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I will ask God in His loving arms to hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will ask God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for the American people. And I will ask God to give wisdom, strength and courage to President Obama that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for His people.

And I will close by asking God three times, please God, please God, please God, continue to bless America.

#### THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, Congress this week will focus on the Ryan Republican budget, probably the most profoundly negative and cynical plan ever advanced by a major party in the House of Representatives.

There are lots of individual analyses that are available to Americans, not from spin masters, but from serious journalists and analysts. I strongly